
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1823 S Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	March 28, 2013	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	13-209	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition
		Subdivision

Architect John Linam, on behalf of owner Lindsay Reichman, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a three-story rear addition with a fourth-story mezzanine to the rear of a three-story frame rowhouse in Dupont Circle.

Property History and Description

1823 S Street, NW is a three-story Italianate frame rowhouse that likely dates from the early 1870s, just prior to the building code prohibition of frame construction in 1877. The façade features a two-story frame projecting bay, bracketed wood cornice, and two-over-two windows. The property, together with a two-story frame house to the east, is set back approximately 5' from the building restriction line and the adjoining late 19th century rowhouses and early 20th century apartment houses. The rear elevation has been substantially altered from its original condition; it is covered in a thick layer of stucco and has a fenestration pattern and windows that are not original and appear to date from the second half of the 20th century.

The house is unusual, both for the Dupont Circle Historic District and city-wide, as frame houses in Washington are more typically two stories rather than three. It is possible that the house was originally constructed as a twin of the two-story frame house next door with the third floor added at a later date.

Proposal

The proposal calls for removing the altered rear wall and constructing a three-story rear addition that would measure approximately 19' deep by the width of the lot (14.83'). The addition would be frame clad in stucco; the rear elevation would have a single one-over-one double hung window and a door on each level opening to a small balcony. A fourth floor mezzanine, measuring 15' deep, would be set back 2' from the new rear elevation. The mezzanine would open to a small roof deck. The front edge of the roof deck would be set back approximately 25' from the front façade; the mezzanine would be set back approximately 37' from the front facade.

The plans also call for reconstruction and expansion of an existing basement areaway stair. The plans indicate that four electrical meters would be placed within the areaway below grade level.

Evaluation

The Board has traditionally shown flexibility in allowing a variety of alterations and additions to take place on rear elevations of row buildings, as they rarely affect significant character-defining features. In this instance, the rear elevation is highly altered and does not contribute to the significance of the property. The proposed addition is compatible in size, materials, fenestration

and simplicity of detail with the character of the property. This block has a wide variety of rear yard setbacks, including two apartment buildings to the east that have essentially no rear yard setback. While the proposed addition will project beyond the rear elevations of the two adjoining houses, it will not project in a manner that is incompatible with the range of setbacks in the block.

The proposed fourth floor mezzanine level to the addition would be set back 37' from the front façade; together with the slight setback of the house from the building line and the heights of the surrounding houses and apartment buildings, it will not be visible from any street views. The mezzanine is also being constructed only over the new rear addition, and will not alter the existing historic building's roof.

As the design continues to be developed, the plans should be specific regarding the extent of alteration and demolition to the existing building, including the roof and floor assemblies.

The existing basement stair and areaway are extremely tight and there is sufficient space for them to be compatibly expanded to improve access. While the proposal to install the electric meters within the areaway below-grade space is laudable, it doesn't appear that this would be possible without lowering the depth significantly to obtain the minimum 18" clearance above the areaway floor. However, if the depth is dropped greater than 30" below grade, this will trigger the requirement for a railing around it, which is not consistent with the Board's guidelines.¹ This should continue to be explored in consultation with PEPCO and the HPO to ensure a compatible solution.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board:

- *Find the proposed addition compatible with the Dupont Circle Historic District and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act,*
- *Direct the applicant to continue working with staff on refining the plans, defining the scope of demolition, and exploring the best solution for the front areaway*
- *Delegate final approval to the staff.*

¹ *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows*, "3.6: Fences around areaways are discouraged because they are obtrusive and out of character with historic site conditions. Decreasing the depth of an areaway or providing an alternative means of protection can eliminate the need for fences around areaways and window wells."